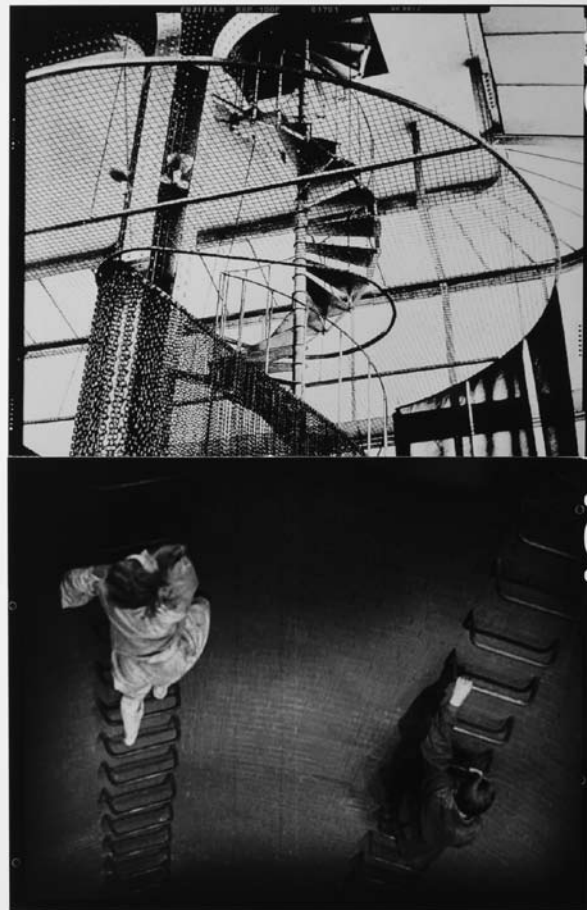




Paweł Książek



Front Cover:

*Silent Utopia 03 (Metropolis / Gyula Kaesz, National Savings Bank,
Budapest 1940), 2008, oil on canvas, 160x120 cm (fragment)*

*Silent Utopia Czechoslovak Pavilion (Metropolis / Jaromir Krejcar,
Czechoslovak Pavilion, Paris International Exposition, 1937),
2009, slides 9x10 inch framed in glass case, 33x43 cm*

Paweł Książek *Silent Utopia*

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Paweł Książek's project *Silent Utopia* is a speculative fantasy regarding the infiltrations and connections between Eastern European modernism in architecture and German silent film of the 1920's. The Art Basel Statements presentation focuses on *Metropolis*, the 1925 film by director and architect, Fritz Lang, and the implementations of such prominent architects of the period.

Fritz Lang's film conceives of an architectural future directly inspired by the Manhattan skyline. "I saw a street that by means of neon lights was lit as brightly as if it were day. (...) This impression gave me my first idea of a city of the future. The skyscrapers functioned as an opulent theatre-set hung to dazzle, dispel, and hypnotize from a dismal sky." Fritz Lang's vision that materialized in *Metropolis* was unfortunately never accepted by the public. Architecture, though, surfaced as an astonishingly resilient tool for constructing a vision of the future, both in science fiction film and in reality. The architects of the 20's and 30's were as well dreaming of an idealized person, society and city. Although both visions – the fantastical future projections of the film of the period and the grandiose idealism visible in the architecture– awakened ambitious promises, they were quickly met with public repulsion and dismissed, becoming a silent utopia of broken dreams.

Paweł Książek examines the connections between this architecture and the film and based on these connections, he proposes a hypothetical analogy for the existence of a sensibility common to that era of creators and thinkers. Upon examining both aesthetics, he wonders whether there were visual markers that could have been prognostic of the impending catastrophe. Książek speculates about how a film could look, and how its content would be altered or maintained, when Czech, Hungarian or Polish architecture replaces the scenography. What would it look like if the film was made in Prague with the Bata Shop building in the background (Ludvik Kysela, Bata Store, Prague 1929), or in Brno in front of Josef Kranz's 1929 Café Era, using the building's neon E-R-A sign to light the street on a *Metropolis* night? In fact, why wasn't the film shot on Warsaw's "Ulica Przyszłości" ("Future Street") designed by Lech Niemojewski in 1925?

Paweł Książek's paintings and photomontages function as his tools in effacing the border between document and fiction. By juxtaposing and overlaying these two historical phenomena, connected by a trust in the future and contemporaneously created in different places in Europe, Paweł Książek has built a new version of the world and his own fake vision of the past. *Silent Utopia* is simultaneously a historiographical examination of an era and an idealism and a reckoning of the development of the aesthetic relationship between Eastern and Western Europe in modernity. The work that he has created based on archival materials is principally surreal. Asserting that both the past and the future are inaccessible to us, Paweł Książek offers us the potentially most efficient way to get know them, in fantasy.

Monika Branicka

Silent Utopia Domány (Metropolis / Ferenc Domány, Theater, Budapest, 1938)

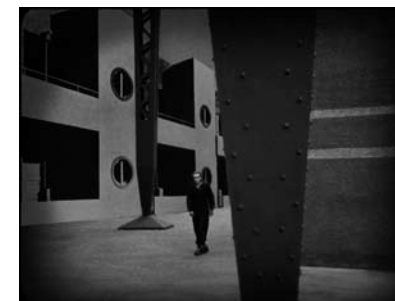
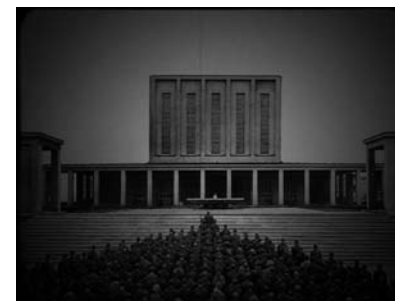
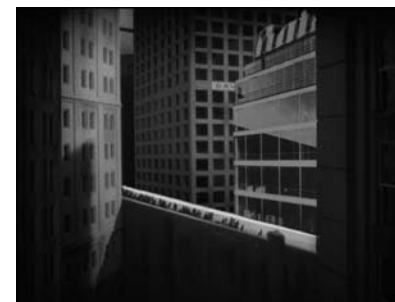
Silent Utopia Kysela (Metropolis / Ludvik Kysela, Baťa Store, Prague, 1929–30)

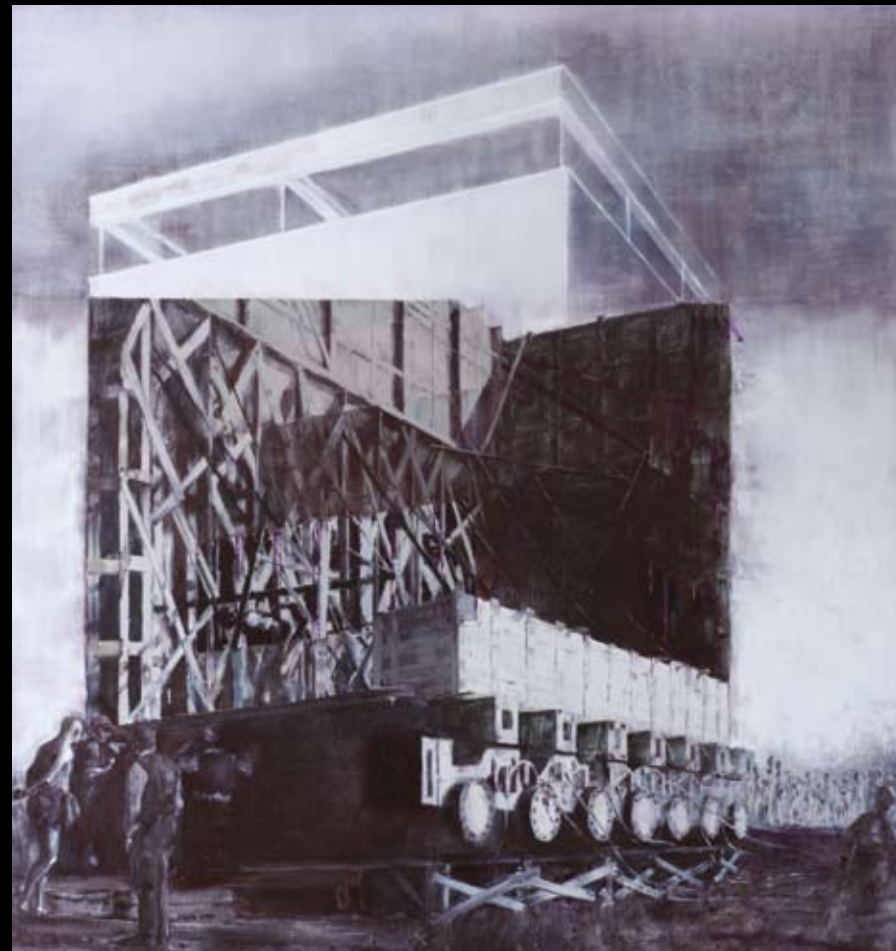
Silent Utopia Hofstatter (Metropolis / B. Hofstatter and F. Domany's building, Budapest, 1937)

Silent Utopia Syrkus (Metropolis / Szymon Syrkus, Pavilion, National Exhibition, Poznań, 1929)

Silent Utopia Mezera (Alois Mezera, City Crematorium, Prague)

Silent Utopia Boehm (Metropolis / Victor Boehm, Rowhouse apartments, Miscolec-Tapolca, 1933), 2009, c-print, 19x25 cm each





Silent Utopia

Paweł Książek's work is constructed from dusty artifacts (from places, rumors or phantasmagorias), mutually excluding tracks and obscure, elusive data collected obsessively and with a detective's precision. His earlier work constitutes a painterly cabinet of curiosities. The works are pinned to an unmovable moment in time. They create their own constellation of facts, which leads the viewer further astray and into thorns rather than towards discovering a soothing final truth.

Fleshy and absurd details, anecdotes told with severe solemnity, bloody shambles and plague as the background. The more data there are, the less certainty. Then, faith fades, less and less, the will smolders.

In this project, new tracks appear: pre-war scene design laded from pre-war filmic masterpieces—nightmares—the sharp edges of interwar modernity and the sleepwalker's drops of sweat. At the same time, an omnipresent architecture's vanity: a proud and majestic certainty settles against the buildings' foundations, disciplined until they are head-reeling. Cinematographic worlds, permanently subjected to irrevocable erosion (a cinema's death seen under a microscope), reconstructed anew according to unaccepted procedures and stubborn, quasi-taxonomic orders. The architecture, created to scare a viewer dizzy within the rattle of the cinema's projector, collides with impetus into the architecture that rose to heal social disorder and protect against aesthetic nonchalance. Instead of the expected piles of rubble, suspiciously stable structures arise. Impossible buildings germ, organic in their nature: nightmarish floors where the privileged caste can show secretly stifled, stinking emotions. Futurological phantasmagorias (a kingdom inhabited by science-fiction writers, kids and architects!) are free from responsibility and filled with glowing embers. Not without reason, the slogan for the 1926 film, *Metropolis*, aired: the heart must serve as intermediary between the brain and the hands...

We can compare Paweł Książek's paintings and display cabinets with a private mausoleum of obsession, where brutal curatorial practices are assimilated—to raise from the dead, to force objects to talk, or to try to revive a whole historical-artificial army of zombies—agglomerated out of scraps of the past: sub-cultural myths, tender dreams and simple trash.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, we can afford a motionless, sense of apocalyptic happiness. Regardless, a catastrophe is hanging overhead. Everything interlocks with everything else. And in the end: the will still grows weaker.

Sebastian Cichocki, Contemporary Art Museum, Warsaw

previous pages:

Silent Utopia 04 (Metropolis / Gyula Kaesz, Interior, National Savings Bank, Budapest, 1940), 2009, oil on canvas, 160x150 cm

Silent Utopia 06 (Metropolis / Jadwiga Dobrzyńska and Zygmunt Łoboda, Single-family house, Warsaw, 1932), 2009, oil on canvas, 160x150 cm

Silent Utopia 01 (József Fischer, House on Szépvölgyi Avenue, Budapest, 1935), 2008, oil on canvas, 140x160 cm and Babel (found footage based on Metropolis, Fritz Lang, 1925), 2009, video loop 5:09 min.



Paweł Książek

Born 1973 in Andrychów, lives and works in Krakow, Poland.

1992-1997 Studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Poland

1996-1997 DAAD-Scholarship at the University of Design in Offenbach, Germany

Individual exhibitions (selection):

- 2009 Silent Utopia , Art Basel Statements, ŻAK I BRANICKA, Basel, CH
- 2009 Paweł Książek, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, AT
- 2008 Sets, Bunkier Sztuki, Krakow, PL (cat.)
- 2007 Africanized Honey Bees, ŻAK Gallery, Berlin, D
- 2006 KRK, Potocka Gallery, Krakow, PL
- 2005 1967-1995?, Pies Gallery, Poznań, PL
- Speculation, CC Gallery, (Aktuelle Kunst Graz), Graz, AT
- The last is the darkest, the last is real, Kunstbüro, Kunsthalle 8, Vienna, AT

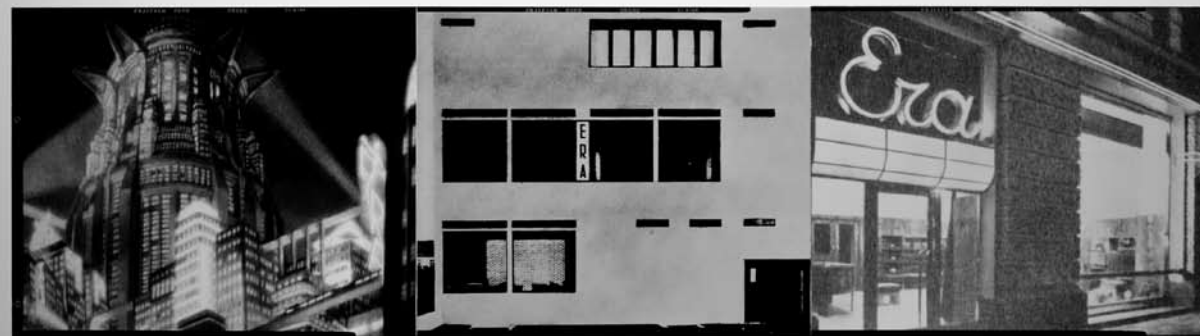
Group exhibitions (selection):

- 2008 Something Must Break, OFF festival, Mysłowice, PL
- 2007 Reconnaissance of painting, GCK, Katowice, PL, (cat.)
- 2006 Co z nami teraz będzie, Potocka gallery, Krakow, PL
- Team colours', f.a.i.t, Krakow, PL (cat.)
- Soleil Noir, Depression and Society, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, AT
- Fauna://hybrid, Gallery Charim, Vienna, AT (cat.)
- Collection of Malopolska Foundation of Modern Art. "Znaki czasu", PL (cat.)
- 2005 In this (our) country, VIA, Turku, FIN
- Beauty or Painterly Effects, BWA Bielsko-Biała, Breslau, Zielona Góra, PL, (cat.)
- 2004 Age of Romanticism, CCA, Kijów, Lwow, UA (cat.)
- 2003 Prague Biennale 1, Prague, CZ (cat.)
- Bielska Jesień (Award), BWA Bielsko-Biała, PL (cat.)
- Simon Says Aloha to Polish Art, STHLM ArtFair, Stockholm, SE
- 2001 The Most Dangerous Brushes, Królikarnia, Warsaw, PL (cat.)
- 2000 Young Art from Krakow, Museum Junge Kunst, Frankfurt/Oder, D

Silent Utopia Era Café (Metropolis / Josef Kranz, Era Café. Brno, 1927-29), 2009, slides 9x10 inch framed in glass case, 33x43 cm (detail)

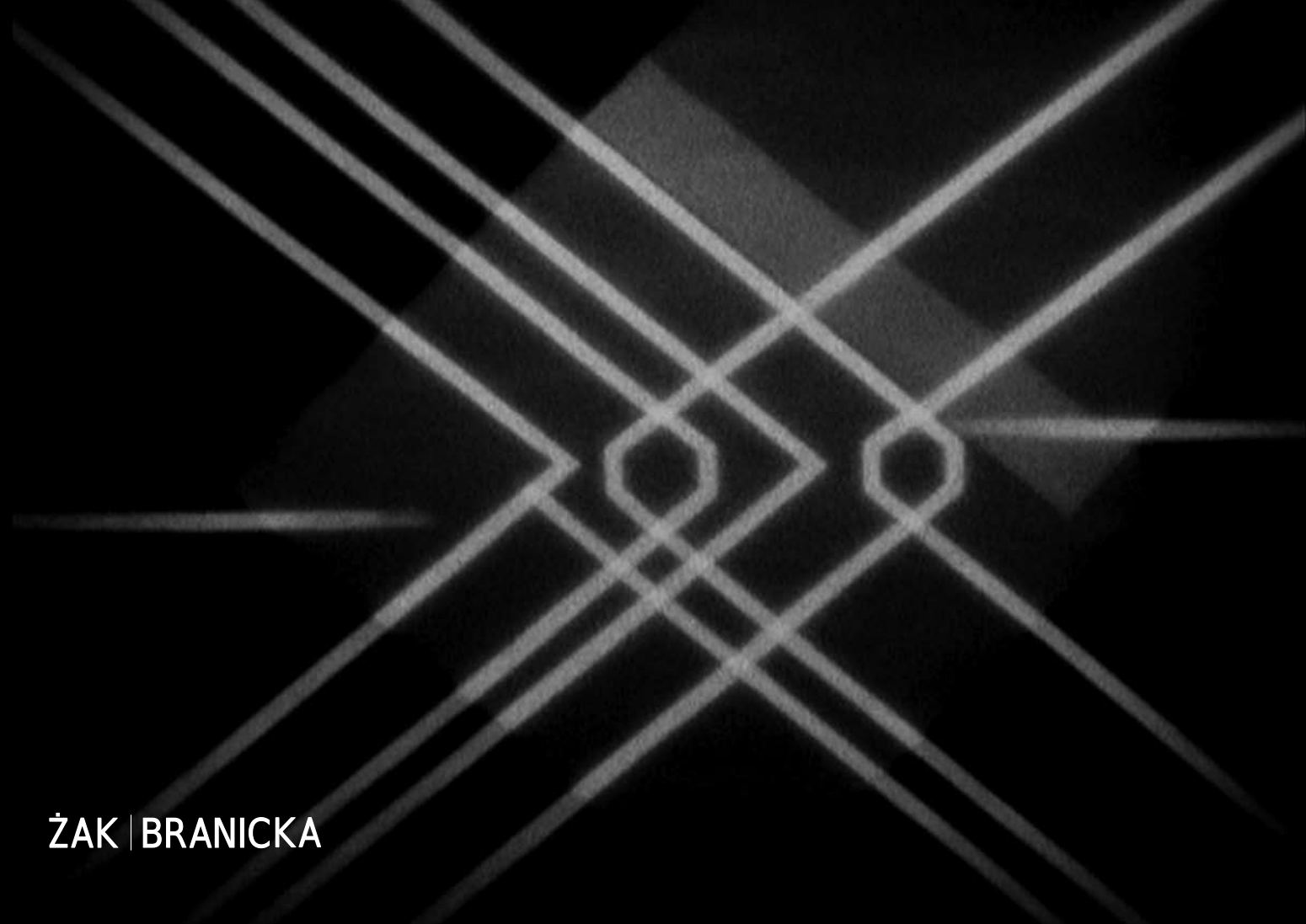
Back Cover: film still from *Metropolis*

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